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(56) Documents Cited

EP 0507482 A2 EP 0493973 A1 US 5471204 A

(58) Field of Search

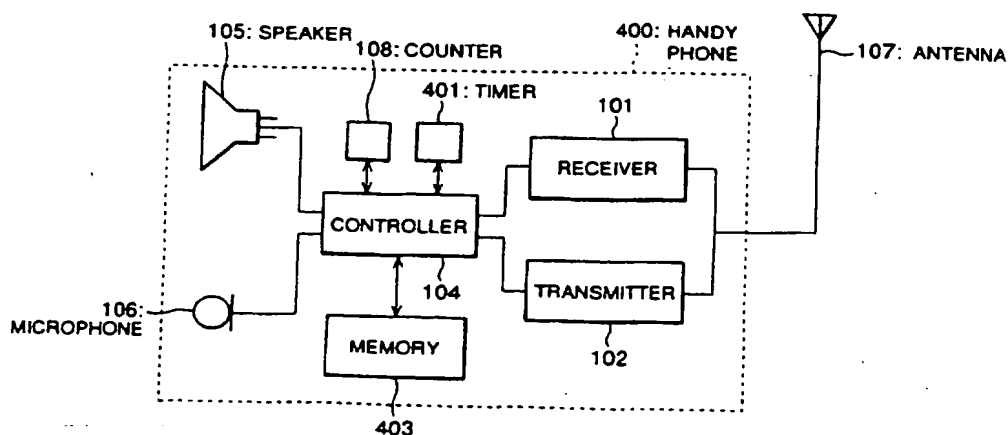
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LERA

INT CL<sup>6</sup> G08B 3/10 , H04M 1/00 19/04 , H04Q 7/32  
ONLINE: WPI

(54) Call Alert for a Radio Receiver

(57) In a radio communication apparatus, a counter 108 is reset to its initial state if the user of the apparatus responds to an alert tone representative of an incoming call, or caused to count the number of calls if the user does not respond. When this number reaches a reference value, the volume of the alert tone is increased for the current incoming call or for the next call. Further, if the user does not respond to the incoming call, a timer 401 starts counting time. When an incoming call is repeated within a preselected time, the volume of the alert tone is increased. The louder alert tone may have a different pattern.

FIG.6



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FIG.1

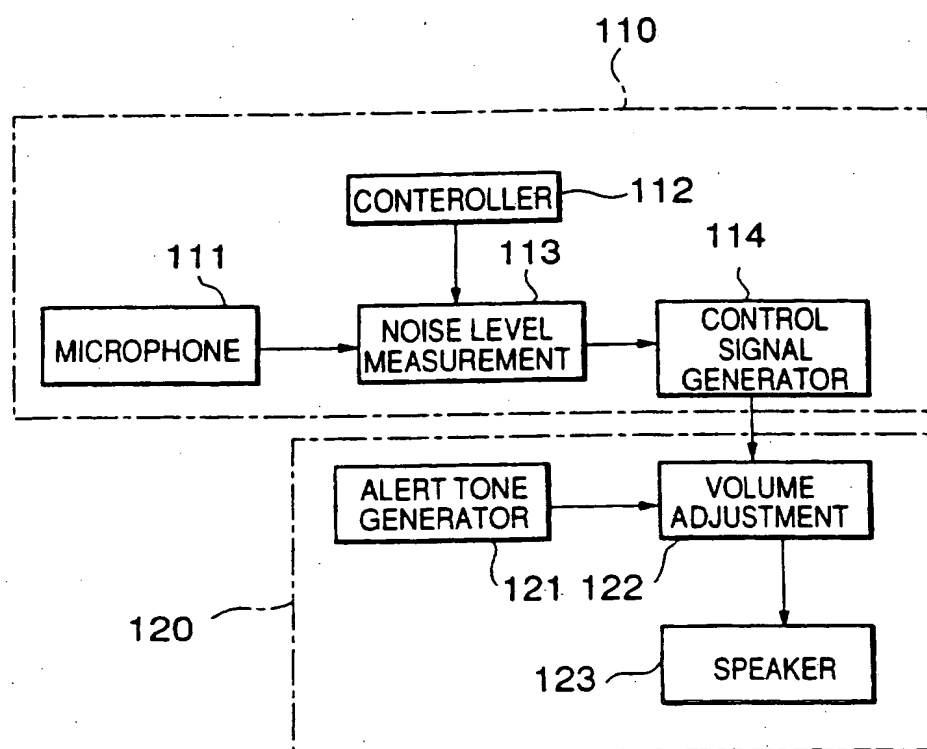
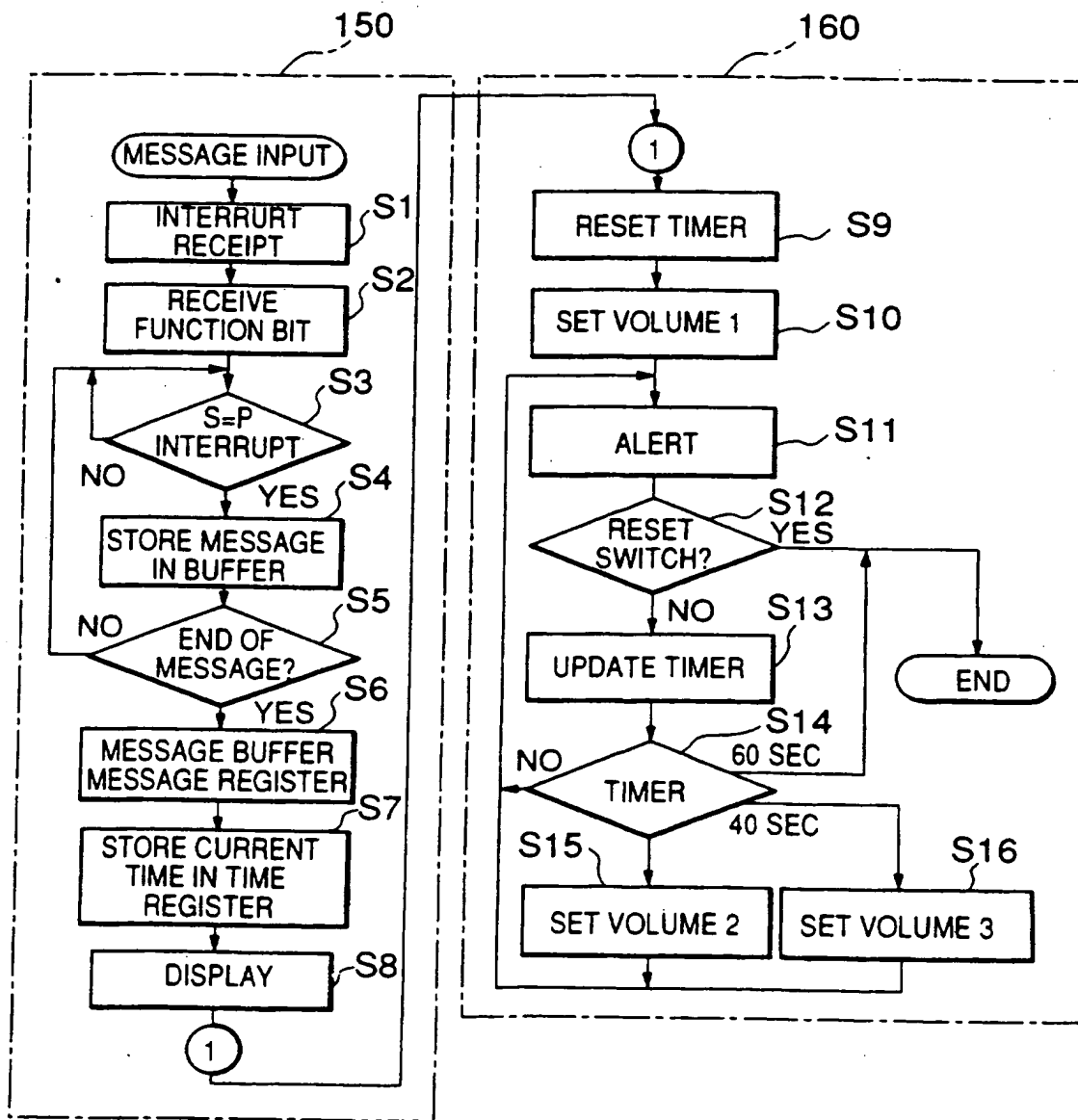


FIG.2 PRIOR ART



ORIGINAL  
NO MARGINALIA

FIG.3

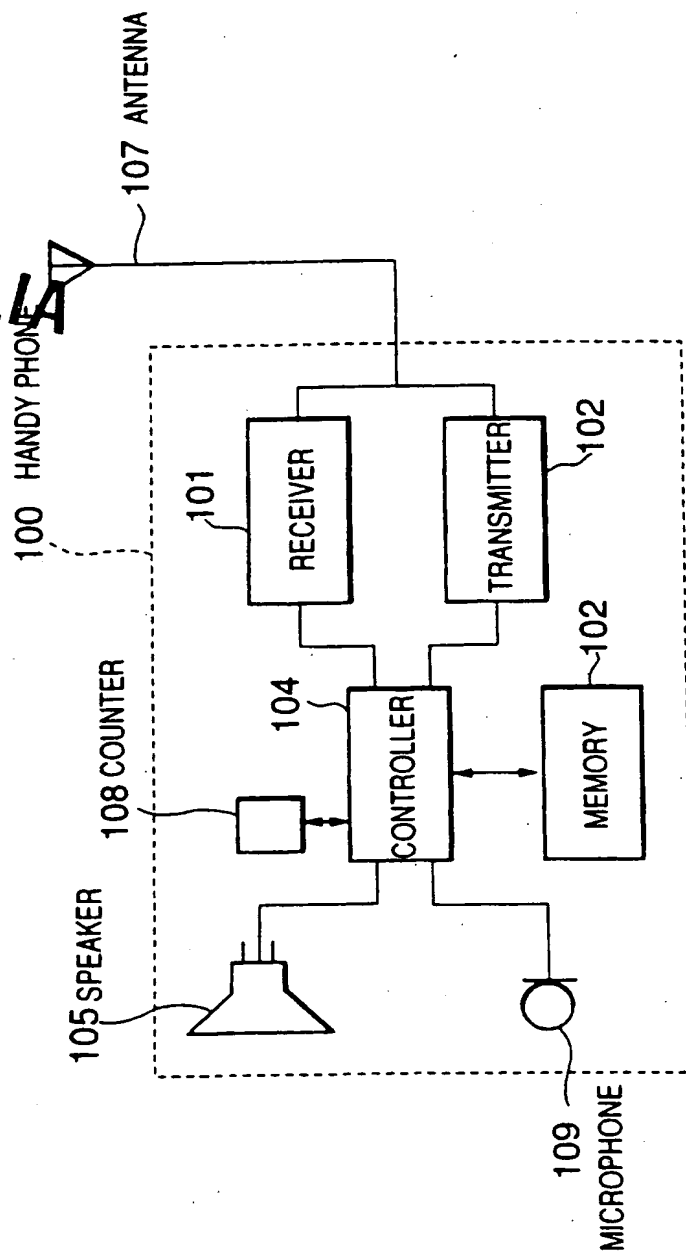


FIG.4

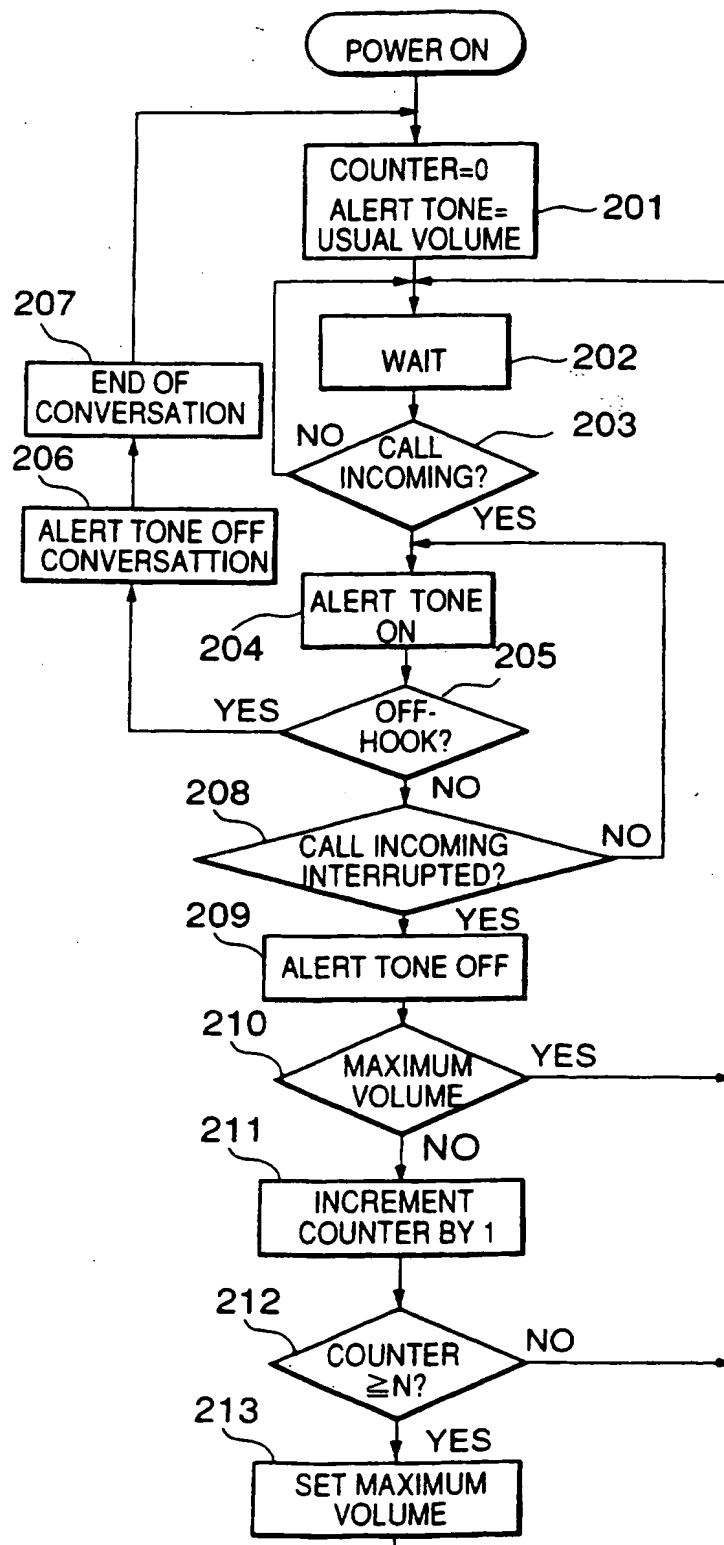


FIG.5

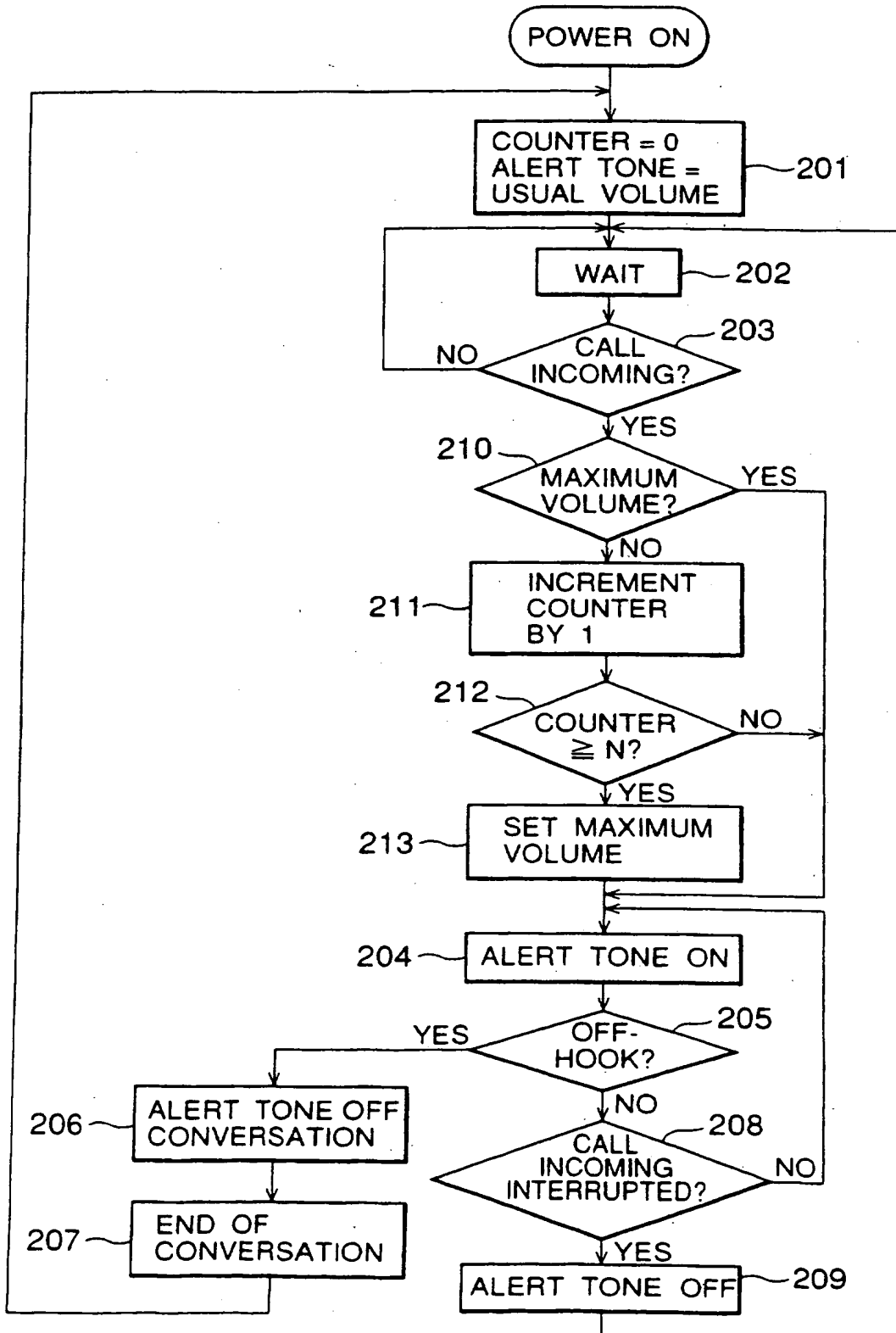
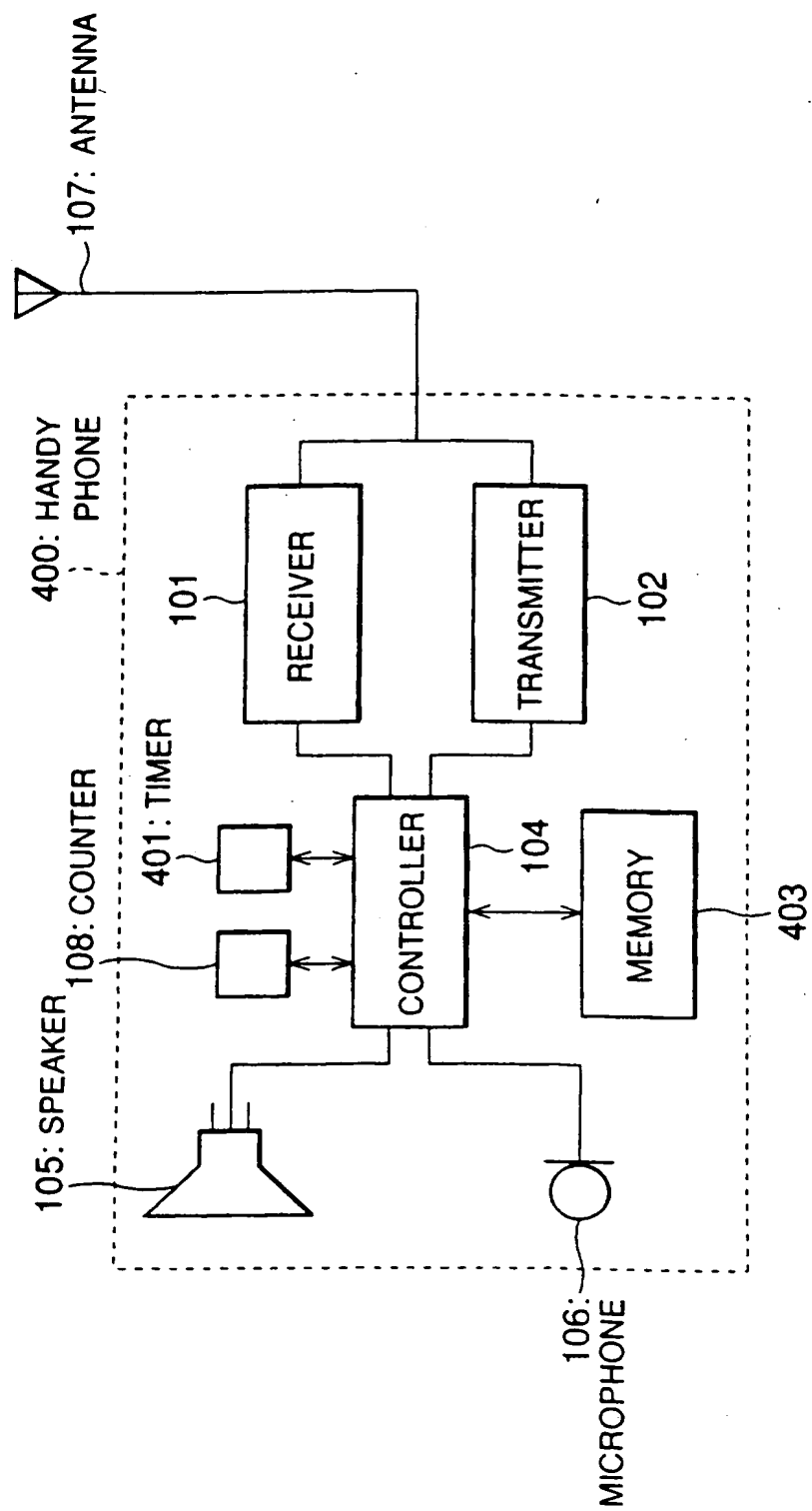


FIG.6

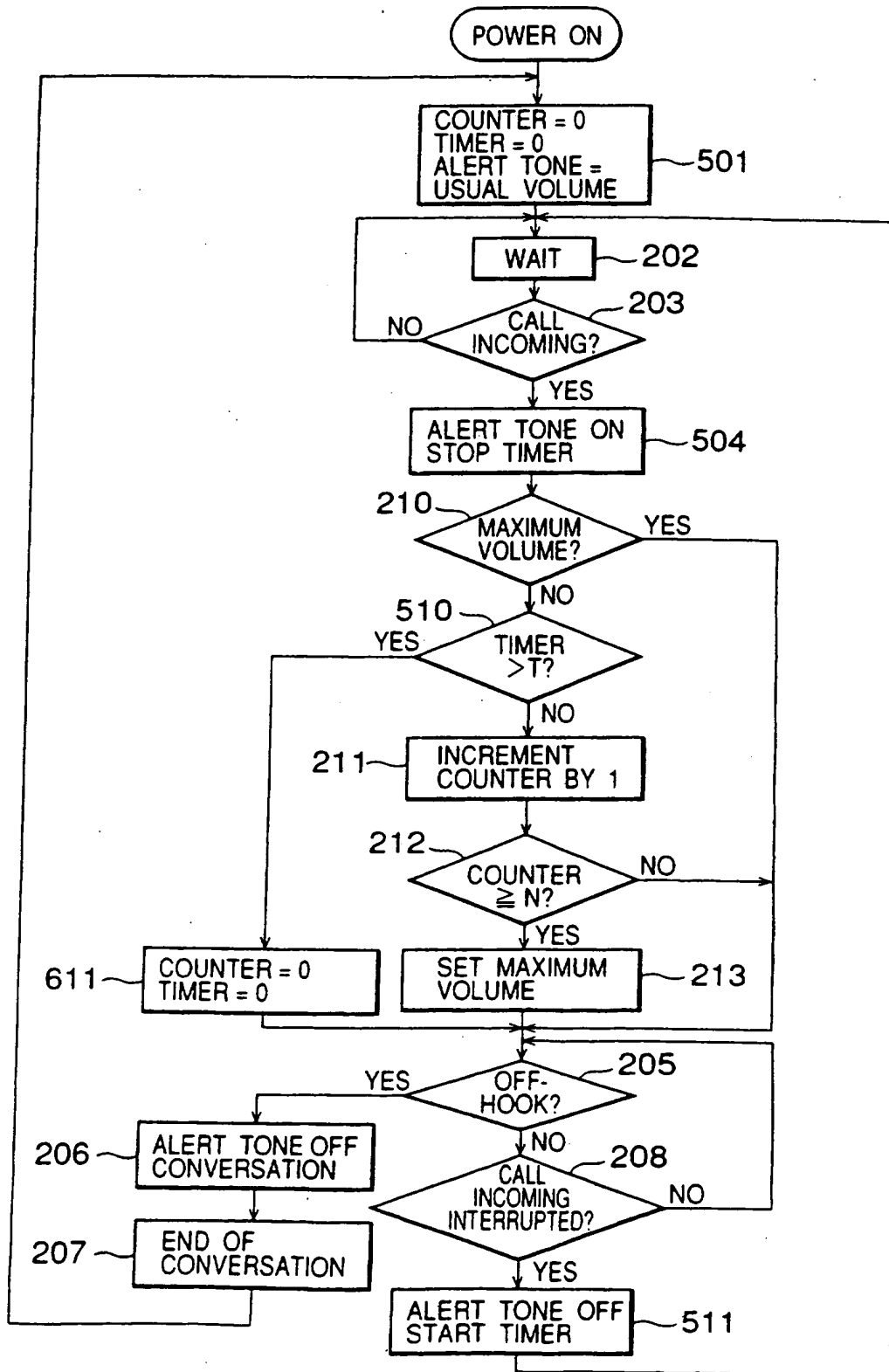


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# FIG.8



## RADIO COMMUNICATION APPARATUS

5

The present invention relates to radio communication apparatus, in particular to a handy phone or similar radio

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communication apparatus capable of controlling the volume of an alert tone and, more particularly, to a radio communication apparatus capable of reporting an unusual situation happened to the user of the apparatus to those around the user.

15

A value-added alert tone to be output on the receipt of a call is important in a handy phone, a slave unit included in a cordless telephone system, a mobile phone, a wireless microphone or similar radio communication apparatus. The value-added alert tone increases the users's convenience in the handling of the phone and allows the phone to adapt itself to the varying environment. Radio communication apparatuses with improved control over the alert tone are taught in, e.g., Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication Nos. 4-56536 (document 1) and 63-187433 (document 2). However, the conventional value-added alert tone schemes have some problems left unsolved, as follows.

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25

One of the conventional schemes measures a noise level around the apparatus, and then determines the volume of the alert tone matching the measured noise level. Although this kind of scheme successfully alerts the user to an incoming call in a noisy environment, it does not work when

the volume of the alert tone must be loud in a quiet environment. For example, when the apparatus is put in the user's bag and buried in other various goods, it is likely that the user does not notice the alert tone. In such a case, the volume of the alert  
5 tone cannot be increased because the noise level in the bag is usually extremely low.

Another conventional scheme sequentially increases the alert tone with the elapse of time during a single call incoming from, e.g., a base station in a handy phone system, calling the user's attention little by little. However, the time when the caller gives up calling and hangs up depends on the caller. If the caller calls the  
10 same apparatus repeatedly, but hangs up soon each time, as the volume of the alert tone of the apparatus is not increased sufficiently, the apparatus does not alert the user's attention.

It is therefore an object of at least the preferred embodiments of the present invention to provide a radio communication apparatus capable of increasing the user's  
15 convenience and providing sure alert.

In a first aspect, the present invention provides a radio communication apparatus comprising:

a counter adapted to be set to an initial state if a user of said apparatus responds to an incoming call, or set to count a number of incoming calls if the user  
20 does not respond to the incoming call;

a memory for storing a reference value representative of a number of incoming calls; and

a controller for comparing an output from said counter and said reference value, and if said count is at least equal to said reference value, for increasing a  
25 volume of an alert tone generated in response to an incoming call from a first volume to a second volume and for feeding the alert tone of said second volume to a speaker.

In a second aspect, the present invention provides a radio communication apparatus comprising:

a counter adapted to be set to an initial state if a user of said apparatus  
30 responds to an incoming call, or set to count a number of incoming calls if the user does not respond to the incoming call;

a timer adapted to be set to an initial state if the user responds to the incoming

call, or set to start counting time and outputting said time count if the user does not respond to the incoming call;

5 a memory for storing a first reference value representative of a number of incoming calls and a second reference value representative of a preselected time interval; and

10 a controller for (a) comparing an output from said counter and said first reference value, and if said count is at least equal to said reference value, increasing a volume of an alert tone generated in response to an incoming call from a first volume to a second volume and feeding the alert tone of said second volume to a speaker, and for (b) comparing the time count output from said timer and said second reference value and if said time count is at least equal to said second reference value, instructing said counter and said timer to stop operating, and restoring the alert tone to said first volume.

15 In a third aspect, the present invention provides a method of controlling an alert tone of a radio communication apparatus, comprising the steps of:

setting an initial counting state if a user of said apparatus responds to an incoming call, or counting a number of incoming calls and outputting a count if the user does not respond to the incoming call; and

20 comparing the count and a preselected number of incoming calls, and if said count is at least equal to said preselected number of calls, increasing a volume of an alert tone generated in response to an incoming call from a first volume to a second volume and driving a speaker with the alert tone of said second volume.

25 In a fourth aspect, the present invention provides a method of controlling an alert tone of a radio communication apparatus, comprising the steps of:

setting an initial counting state if a user of said apparatus responds to an incoming call, or counting a number of incoming calls and outputting a count if the user does not respond to the incoming call;

30 setting an initial timing state if the user of said apparatus responds to the incoming call, or counting time and outputting said time count if the user does not respond to the call incoming;

comparing the count and a preselected number of incoming calls, and if said

count is at least equal to said preselected number of calls, increasing volume of an alert tone generated in response to an incoming call from a first volume to a second volume, and driving a speaker with the alert tone of said second volume; and

- 5        comparing the time count and a preselected time, and if said time count is at least equal to said preselected time, stopping comparing said count and said preselected number of incoming calls, stopping counting the number of incoming calls and the time, and restoring the alert tone to said first volume.

- 10        In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, a radio communication apparatus outputs an alert tone having a first volume via a speaker in the event of call incoming from a base station. A counter is reset to its initial state if the user of the apparatus responds to the call incoming, or is caused to count the number of times of call incoming if the user does not respond to the call incoming. A memory stores a reference value representative of

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a preselected number of times of call incoming beforehand. A controller compares a count output from the counter and the reference value, and if they compare equal, increases the volume of an alert tone from a first volume to a second volume for the current call incoming or the next call incoming, and feeds the alert tone of the second volume to a speaker.

5 The apparatus may additionally include a timer which is reset to its initial state if the user responds to the incoming call, or is caused to start counting time and output a time if the user does not respond to the incoming call. In this case, the memory stores a first reference value  
10 representative of a preselected number of times of call incoming and a second reference value representative of a preselected time interval beforehand. The controller compares a count output from the counter and the first reference value, and if they compare equal, increases the volume of the alert tone from the first volume to the second volume for the current  
15 call incoming or the next call incoming, and feeds the alert tone to a speaker. In addition, the controller compares the time output from the timer and the second reference value, and if they compare equal, stops comparing the count and causes the counter and time to stop operating, and restores the alert tone to the first volume. Further, the controller may  
20 change the pattern of the alert tone while loudening it.

Preferred features of the present invention will now be described, purely by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figs. 1 and 2 each shows a particular conventional radio communication apparatus;

Fig. 3 is a block diagram schematically showing a radio communication apparatus embodying the present invention;

5 Figs. 4 and 5 are flowcharts each demonstrating a specific operation of the embodiment;

Fig. 6 is a block diagram schematically showing an alternative embodiment of the present invention; and

10 Figs. 7 and 8 are flowcharts each demonstrating a specific operation of the alternative embodiment.

In the figures, identical reference numerals denote identical structural elements.

15 To better understand the present invention, a brief reference will be made to a conventional radio communication apparatus of the type taught in the previously mentioned document 1. As shown in Fig. 1, the conventional apparatus includes noise sensing means 110 and alert tone loudening means 120. The noise sensing means 110 senses a noise level  
20 around the apparatus and generates a control signal based on the noise level. The alert tone loudening means 120 increases the volume of an alert tone in response to the control signal. With these means 110 and 120, the apparatus is capable of loudening the alert tone in a noisy environment.

25 The noise sensing means 110 includes a microphone 111 for transforming noise around the apparatus to a corresponding electric signal.

A controller 112 outputs a sampling signal at predetermined intervals while the apparatus is in a stand-by state. A noise level measurement 113 samples the above electric signal in synchronism with the sampling signal output from the controller 112, digitizes the electric signal, and thereby  
5 determines the varying noise level. A control signal generator 114 produces a mean value from the output of the measurement 113 and a reference value, and generates a control signal corresponding to the means value.

The alert tone loudening means 120 includes an alert tone  
10 generator 121 for generating an electric signal representative of an alert tone. A volume adjustment 122 adjusts the electric signal output from the alert tone generator 121 in accordance with the control signal output from the control signal generator 114. A speaker 123 outputs the alert tone adjusted by the adjustment 122.

15 Fig. 2 shows a flowchart representative of the procedure disclosed in the document 2 and relating to a pager. As shown, the procedure is generally made up of a first stage 150 for receiving and displaying a message, and a second stage 160 for sequentially loudening an alert tone with the elapse of time. The alert tone is loudened little by  
20 little during a single incoming call.

At the first stage 150, the pager identifies an identification (ID) number assigned thereto and included in a received signal, and starts call incoming processing (steps S1 and S2). Then, the pager receives a message and stores it in a memory (steps S3-S6). Subsequently, the pager  
25 displays the message together with the time of receipt (steps S7 and S8).



At the second stage 160, the pager starts a timer while producing an alert tone of usual volume (steps S9-S11). If the user of the pager does not respond to the alert tone, the pager sequentially loudens the tone while updating the timer (steps S12-S16).

5           The conventional schemes described above have some problems left unsolved, as discussed earlier.

Referring to Fig. 3, a radio communication apparatus embodying the present invention is shown and implemented as a hand phone by way of example. As shown, the hand phone, generally 100, includes a  
10   receiver 101 for receiving a radio signal from a base station, and a transmitter 102 for sending a radio signal to a base station. A memory 103 stores a telephone number assigned to the phone 100 and various numerical values necessary for the control of the phone 100 and including a first reference value which will be described. A controller 104 controls  
15   the receiver 101, transmitter 102, memory 103, etc. A speaker 105 outputs a speech signal. A speech signal is input to a microphone 106. A radio signal is received from or sent to the base station via an antenna 107. A call incoming counter 108 counts the number           of incoming calls.

20           The controller 104 receives the number of incoming calls from the counter 108, and controls the entire phone 100 by controlling the call incoming, transmission, receipt, etc. When a call meant for the phone 100 is received from a base station, the counter 108 is incremented by 1 (one) to count the incoming call meant for the user of the phone 100. If the user responds to the call, the counter 108 is reset while feeding the number  
25   of times of receipt (once in this case) to the controller 104 as a second

count.

The receiver 101, transmitter 103, speaker 105, microphone 106 and antenna 107 each has a conventional construction and will not be described specifically.

5           A reference will be made to Fig. 4 for describing a specific operation of the illustrative embodiment. Briefly, the specific operation is such that when the user of the phone 100 does not respond to a call received twice continuously by the phone 100, an alert tone is output with its maximum volume for the third and successive incoming call. In this  
10       case, two consecutive incoming calls is           the first reference value that allows the user to perform no operation in response to the call. A value N to be set in the counter 108 is selected to be "2" beforehand.

          As shown in Fig. 4, when the user of the phone 100 turns on a power switch provided on the phone 100, the counter 108 is reset to its  
15       initial value, i.e., zero while an alert tone of usual volume is set (step 201). In this condition, the phone 100 waits for an incoming call (step 202). When an incoming call signal from a base station is detected (Y, step 203), the alert tone of usual volume is output (step 204). Then, whether or not the user has responded to the call (off-hook) is determined (step 205).

20           If the user has responded to the call (Y, step 205), the alert tone is stopped, and conversation is held on the phone 100 (step 206). When the user ends the conversation and releases the channel (step 207), the program returns to the step 201. If the user does not respond to the call (N, step 205), whether or not the call incoming has been interrupted is  
25       determined (step 208). If the call incoming has not been interrupted (N,

step 208), the program returns to the step 204 in order to output the alert tone continuously. If otherwise (Y, step 208), the alert tone is stopped, and then whether or not the volume of the alert tone is at a maximum is determined (step 210). The step 210 is included in order to execute receipt processing rapidly when the volume is at a maximum. Therefore, the step 210 is not necessary if the period of time necessary for the steps 211, 212 and 213 does not have to be reduced, or if the volume is varied in three or more consecutive steps, or if the number of incoming calls is used for another purpose also.

If the volume of the alert tone is not maximum (N, step 210), the counter 108 is incremented by 1 (step 211). If otherwise (Y, step 210), the operation returns to the step 201.

After the counter 108 has been incremented by 1 in the step 211, its content is compared with the first reference value  $N = 2$  (step 212). If the content of the counter 108 is 1 or less (N, step 212), the operation returns to the step 202 immediately. If the content is 2 or above (Y, step 212), the alert tone of maximum volume is set for the subsequent incoming call (step S213). Subsequently, the program returns to the step 202.

Of course, the number of incoming calls which allow the user to leave the phone 100 on-hook is open to choice. While the illustrative embodiment varies the volume of the alert tone on the receipt of a call after the preselected number of times of call incoming, the pattern of the alert tone may be replaced with, e.g., a pattern representative of the sound of a siren or that of an alarm bell.

Another specific operation of the above embodiment is shown

in Fig. 5. As shown, the operation is identical with the operation shown in Fig. 4 except that the steps 210 and 213 are inserted between the steps 203 and 204. In this case, three incoming calls is the first reference value, and the number N to be set in the counter 108 is selected to be "3" beforehand. This specific operation is available only if the interval between the decision on call incoming (step 203) and the decision on the user's response (step 205) is not questionable. If the above interval should be reduced, then the operation shown in Fig. 4 is advantageous over the operation shown in Fig. 5.

Referring to Fig. 6, an alternative embodiment of the present invention will be described. As shown, a radio communication apparatus, generally 400, is also implemented as a hand phone. The phone 400 additionally includes a timer 401 for counting an interval between consecutive incoming calls and during which the user does not respond to a call. The timer 401 is connected to the controller 104 in parallel with the counter 108. The memory 103 is replaced with a memory 403 capable of storing a second reference value, which will be described, in addition to the first reference value. The controller 104 additionally receives the time of receipt of a call from the timer 401. When the phone 400 receives a call and if the user responds to the call, the timer 401 is initialized. If the user does not respond to the call, the timer 401 starts counting time and reports the counted time to the controller 104 as a second count.

A specific operation of the alternative embodiment will be described with reference to Fig. 7. Briefly, the specific operation is such that if the user of the phone 400 does not respond to either the first call

terminated at the phone 400 or the second call terminated within 10 minutes since the first call, the alert tone is output with the maximum volume for the third and successive calls. In this case, the number of

incoming calls which allows the user to leave the phone 400 on-hook,

5 i.e., the first reference value is "2", and the value N to be loaded in the counter 108 is selected to be ""2" beforehand. Likewise, a second reference value allowable is 10 minutes, and a value M to be loaded in the timer 401 is selected to be "10" beforehand.

10 As shown in Fig. 7, when the user of the phone 400 turns on a power switch provided on the phone 400, the counter 108 and timer 401 are each reset to its initial value, i.e., zero while an alert tone of usual volume is set (step 501). This is followed by steps 202 and 203 identical with the steps 202 and 203 described with reference to Fig. 4. Then, the alert tone starts while the timer 401 stops counting time (step 504). The  
15 step 504 is followed by the steps 205-208 shown in Fig. 4. If the call incoming is interrupted (Y, step 208), the alert tone stops while the timer 401 starts counting time (step 511). The time counted by the timer 401 is compared with the second reference value (step 512). If the time counted by the timer 401 is greater than the second reference value (N, step 512),  
20 whether or not the alert tone has its maximum volume is determined (step 513). If the answer of the step 513 is positive (Y), the program returns to the step 202. If the answer of the step 513 is negative (N), the program returns to the step 501. If the time counted by the timer 401 is smaller than the second reference value (Y, step 512), the steps 210-213 shown in Fig.  
25 4 are executed.

FIG. 8 demonstrates another specific operation of the alternative embodiment. As shown, the steps 501, 202, 203, 504, 210, 510 and 211-213 shown in Fig. 7 are sequentially executed. If the time counted by the timer 401 is greater than the second reference value (Y, step 510), both the counter 108 and the timer 401 are reset to zero (step 611). That is, if the answer of the step 210 is Y, or if the answer of the step 210 is N, or after the step 213 or 611, the steps 205-207, 208 and 511 shown in Fig. 7 are executed. In this manner the volume of the alert tone is determined just after the call incoming. This kind of procedure is available if, e.g., it is not necessary to reduce the interval between the decision on call incoming (step 203) and the decision on the operator's response (step 205). The procedure shown in Fig. 7 is advantageous over the above procedure if the interval must be reduced.

In summary, it will be seen that the present invention provides a radio communication apparatus having various unprecedented advantages, as follows. A call incoming counter is built in the apparatus and allows an alert tone to be loudened when a call is received a predetermined number of times. Therefore, even when the apparatus is held in an unusual condition, e.g., put in the user's bag and buried in other various goods, the apparatus produces an alert tone of volume great enough to alert the user or persons around the user. Further, a call incoming timer is built in the apparatus and allows the alert tone to be loudened when a call is received a preselected number of times within a preselected period of time. This not only alerts the user in case of emergency, i.e., when a call is repeatedly received within a short period of

time, but also frees the user from excessive care in other cases. Consequently, the apparatus surely alerts the user to an incoming call while promoting the user's convenience, and in addition reports the user's unusual condition to those around the user.

5           Various modifications will become possible for those skilled in the art after receiving the teachings of the present disclosure without departing from the scope thereof. For example, the period of time for setting the volume of the alert tone and the number of times of call incoming may be set by the user, as desired, and may be so selected as to  
10           render the apparatus generally applicable to various kinds of environments and business conditions. Further, the user of the apparatus may intentionally restrict call incoming. For example, the alert tone of usual volume, i.e., before being loudened may be replaced with silence.

Each feature disclosed in this specification (which term includes the claims) and/or shown in the drawings may be incorporated in the invention independently of other disclosed and/or illustrated features.

The text of the abstract filed herewith is repeated here as part of the specification.

In a radio communication apparatus, a counter is reset to its initial state if the user of the apparatus responds to an alert tone representative of call incoming, or caused to count the number of times of call incoming if the user does not respond. The number of times of call incoming occurred without any user's response and a reference value are compared. If the number of times counted and reference value compare equal, the volume of the alert tone is increased for the current call incoming or the next call incoming. Further, if the user does not respond to the call incoming, a timer starts counting time. When call incoming is repeated within a preselected period of time, the volume of the alert tone is increased. Loudening the alert tone may be replaced with changing the pattern of the alert tone.

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## CLAIMS

1. A radio communication apparatus comprising:

a counter adapted to be set to an initial state if a user of said apparatus responds to an incoming call, or set to count a number of incoming calls if the user  
5 does not respond to the incoming call;

a memory for storing a reference value representative of a number of incoming calls; and

a controller for comparing an output from said counter and said reference value, and if said count is at least equal to said reference value, for increasing a  
10 volume of an alert tone generated in response to an incoming call from a first volume to a second volume and for feeding the alert tone of said second volume to a speaker.

2. A radio communication apparatus comprising:

a counter adapted to be set to an initial state if a user of said apparatus responds to an incoming call, or set to count a number of incoming calls if the user  
15 does not respond to the incoming call;

a timer adapted to be set to an initial state if the user responds to the incoming call, or set to start counting time and outputting said time count if the user does not respond to the incoming call;

a memory for storing a first reference value representative of a number of incoming calls and a second reference value representative of a preselected time  
20 interval; and

a controller for (a) comparing an output from said counter and said first reference value, and if said count is at least equal to said reference value, increasing a volume of an alert tone generated in response to an incoming call from a first  
25 volume to a second volume and feeding the alert tone of said second volume to a speaker, and for (b) comparing the time count output from said timer and said second reference value and if said time count is at least equal to said second reference value, instructing said counter and said timer to stop operating, and restoring the alert tone to said first volume.



3. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, wherein after increasing the volume to said second volume, said controller is adapted to restore the alert tone to said first volume if the user responds to the call incoming.

5 4. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said controller is adapted to change a pattern of the alert tone while increasing the volume to said second volume.

5. A method of controlling an alert tone of a radio communication apparatus, comprising the steps of:

10 setting an initial counting state if a user of said apparatus responds to an incoming call, or counting a number of incoming calls and outputting a count if the user does not respond to the incoming call; and

comparing the count and a preselected number of incoming calls, and if said count is at least equal to said preselected number of calls, increasing a volume of an alert tone generated in response to an incoming call from a first volume to a second  
15 volume and driving a speaker with the alert tone of said second volume.

6. A method of controlling an alert tone of a radio communication apparatus, comprising the steps of:

20 setting an initial counting state if a user of said apparatus responds to an incoming call, or counting a number of incoming calls and outputting said count if the user does not respond to the incoming call;

setting an initial timing state if the user of said apparatus responds to the incoming call, or counting time and outputting said time count if the user does not respond to the call incoming;

25 comparing the count and a preselected number of incoming calls, and if said count is at least equal to said preselected number of calls, increasing volume of an alert tone generated in response to an incoming call from a first volume to a second volume, and driving a speaker with the alert tone of said second volume; and

comparing the time count and a preselected time, and if said time count is at least equal to said preselected time, stopping comparing said count and said preselected number of incoming calls, stopping counting the number of incoming calls and the  
5 time, and restoring the alert tone to said first volume.

7. A radio communication apparatus substantially as herein described with reference to and as shown in Figure 3 or Figure 6 of the accompanying drawings.

8. A method of controlling an alert time of a radio communication apparatus substantially as herein described with reference to Figures 4 and 5 or  
10 Figures 7 and 8 of the accompanying drawings.



Application No: GB 9627031.9  
Claims searched: all

Examiner: Nigel Hall  
Date of search: 7 March 1997

## Patents Act 1977 Search Report under Section 17

### Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK CI (Ed.O): H4L (LECX, LERA); H4K (KBHC); G4H (HRCU)

Int CI (Ed.6): H04M 1/00,19/04; G08B3/10; H04Q 7/32

Other: Online: WPI

### Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A	EP 0507482 A2 (NOKIA)	
A	EP 0493973 A1 (NEC)	
X	US 5471204 (KUDOH) See claims 1 and 2	1,3,5

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.